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1960 -- THE DECISIVE YEAR OF NATIONAL REVOLUTION IN AFRICA

[Following is the translation of an article by I. Potekhin in Sovremennyi Vostok (Contemporary East), No 12, Moscow, 1960, pages 2-5]

Africans call 1960 the year of Africa, and they have good reasons for this. It is enough to recall the events, to look over a complete set of newspapers, for 1960 and compare them with preceding years in order to understand how important these reasons are.

The year 1960 opened with the proclamation of independence of the eastern part of Cameroun. The transition of Cameroun from the status of a subjugated territory to that of a sovereign state took place under conditions of an aggravated, and to this time unfinished, struggle between two political trends within Cameroun itself. The whole world followed its outcome with intense interest.

In the middle of the year the Republic of the Congo attracted the attention of the world's public; here the imperialists had organized a conspiracy, trying to revive colonialism by transferring state power to their puppets.

On 23 September, the leader of the Soviet Delegation to the XV Session of the United Nations General Assembly, head of the Soviet government N. S. Khrushchev, brought to the Assembly's attention the declaration granting independence to colonial countries and peoples. This initiative of the government of the USSR was met in Africa with the feeling of deep gratefulness to our socialist state and caused embarrassment and confusion in the camp of the colonialists. The discussion of the planned declaration at the plenary sessions of the General Assembly was followed with great interest in all countries of the world.

During the whole year African affairs occupied a large place in international political life. For the Africans themselves, 1960 was a decisive year in the development of national anti-imperialistic revolution: if at the beginning, the map of the African continent showed ten sovereign states, then at the end there were 26; if at the beginning of the year the population of sovereign states comprised about 40 percent of the total popula-

tion of the continent, then at the end of the year it grew to 75 percent.

Among the most important events of the past year it is necessary to acknowledge the proclamation of independence of the British colony of Nigeria, the farthest evolution of the Franco-African Association, and the granting of independence to the Belgian Congo.

The collapse of the British colonial system in tropical Africa began in 1957 when Ghana gained the status of a dominion. It is a small country; the population of Tharia, which was earlier called the Gold Coast, comprises not more than five percent of the general population of the British colonies in Africa. But the triumph of the national revolution in tiny Ghana had an enormous significance for all the African peoples: it served as the signal for national revolution for all tropical Africa.

Having made the first breach in the system of colonialism in tropical Africa, and having given an example to other peoples, Ghana took up on itself the problem of widening the gap, of helping all peoples of Africa in their struggle for independence. On the initiative of the Prime Minister, the present President of Ghana Kwame Nkrumah, the first conference of independent states of Africa and the first conference of the peoples of Africa took place in 1958; it is difficult to over-estimate the significance of these events in the African peoples' struggle for independence.

Speaking of Ghana's role in the development of the anti-imperialistic movement in tropical Africa, one must not pass over another remarkable, historical event: in 1960 Ghana was proclaimed a republic, and the British governor, representative of the British Crown, having gone there for the first time in 1821, left the country. In the history of British colonial policy in tropical Africa, an incident so deplorable for British imperialism had happened for the first time.

But, nevertheless, it is now Ghana -- this mere five percent of the population of the African colonies of Great Britain. Skillfully maneuvering, the British imperialists were able to preserve their direct political rule over 69 million Africans; of these, 35 million were in Nigeria. After India left the colonial system of imperialism, Nigeria was the strongest British colony. The peoples of Nigeria long and persistently fought for their national independence. The British imperialists, leaning upon the support of feudal elements in Nigeria itself, maneuvered, passed one constitutional reform after another, and induced a split in the general Nigerian national-liberation movement, trying with all their power to preserve their colonial rule. But under the pressure of the ever-growing people's movement they had to retreat and relinquish the colonial status. Now Nigeria is a sovereign state. The number of colonial slaves of British imperialism immediately declined by more than 50 percent.

Nigeria's proclamation of independence practically marks the end of the direct rule of the British imperialists in Western Africa. Three small territories remain under British power: Sierra Leone with a population of 1,767,000, Gambia with 275,000, and the western part of Cameroun with 1,400,000. Their fate will be decided in 1961.

The reorganization of the Franco-African association belongs among the other important events of the past year. The break-up of the French colonial system in Africa began in South Africa in 1956 with the proclamation of independence of Morocco and Tunisia, which comprised 54 percent of French colonial territory in Africa. Algeria and the territories located to the south of the Sahara comprised the basic mass of the French colonial possession. The French colonialists started to use arms, and it is already the seventh year that they carry on this dirty colonial war.

In order to save their rule in the colonies to the south of the Sahara, the colonialists employed what they thought was a clever strategem: they declared the colonies states -- members of the Franco-African association, giving them an extremely limited internal autonomy. They thought that they would be successful in deceiving the people, but their plan was soon unmasked. The Republic of Guinea rendered an invaluable service to the peoples of the French colonies. The people of Guinea, led by the Democratic party, headed by the present President of the Republic Sekou Toure, during the referendum of 28 September 1958, refused to join the Association and proclaimed the country a sovereign state. From that day on it proceeded for a very short time -- but it turned out to be enough -- to see with its own eyes the advantage of the status of an independent state over that of an autonomous territory within the framework of the Association. Guinea quickly appeared in the international political arena as a sovereign state: it established diplomatic relations with those countries it thought necessary, it was accepted into the UN and it conducts an independent foreign policy, whereas countries in the Association cannot take even one step without the permission of the French government.

Guinea enters into economic agreements and receives credits from those states it considers necessary, whereas countries of the Association are forced to ask for alms from Paris. Guinea has worked out and is working out plans for reconstructing the national economy in accordance with its own national needs, whereas countries of the Association must first adapt their economy to the needs of the French parent state.

In general, the Republic of Guinea obviously showed that having only won state sovereignty, its peoples will be able to build life by their own plans, and that autonomy granted by the imperialist power to its colonies is no more than the notorious mess of pottage.

In 1960, one after the other, the African members of the Association requested the French government to grant them external political sovereignty, that is, the right to join the United Nations and to establish direct diplomatic relations with other countries.

The government of De Gaulle had to make the concession and grant external political sovereignty to the members of the Association. At the XV Session of the General Assembly, ten former French colonies were admitted to the UN. [See Note].

[Note]: Dahomey, Nigeria, Upper Volta, Ivory Coast, Chad, Central African Republic, Congo (with the capital at Brazzaville), Gabon, Republic of Senegal, and Republic of Mali (the former French Sudan.).

However, the Association has not yet died; it continues to exist, and together with it are strong vestiges of colonialism which limit the sovereignty of the new states. The French government has pressed a series of incomplete agreements on these states, attaching its own conditions for the granting of external political sovereignty. In accordance with these agreements, the African state members of the Association put their military strength under the control of the General Staff of the French government. French military bases are preserved, French armed forces can freely move over the territory of these states, and France reserves for itself the exclusive right of arming and training their military forces. In other words, the African state members of the Association are in actuality chained to the aggressive imperialist bloc as long as the armed forces of France itself fully depend on NATO and SEATO.

France will first of all order supplies of strategic raw material from these countries for herself. In short, the economic and financial aspects of the agreements allow France to preserve in full her economic position. "Included in these agreements are numerous restrictions and snares which, unfortunately, are impossible to examine in full in the given article and which expose the real face and direction of French neo-colonialism," said the French periodical Cahiers du communisme, No 7-8, July-August 1960, page 1279. (Official Reports of Communism).

And yet, all this is still not an "Association," as General De Gaulle planned in 1958. Relations between France and the members of the Association are now founded on bilateral agreements "of friendship and cooperation," which allows the possibility of reconsidering these relations and limiting independence from France. Previously, the Senate and the Executive Council of the Association could legally and actually expand within the Association by their own discretion, that is, by the discretion of the French colonialists. Now, the Senate is replaced by a consultative Inter-Parliamentary Senate, and the Executive Council -- by periodically held conferences of the heads of the States and governments. The rate at which these vestiges of the colonial regime are liquidated depends first of all upon the peoples and governments of these countries.

The Republic of Mali is an example of the situation that is taking shape. The government of Mali took an independent position on the Algerian question, decidedly coming out in support of the government of Fernat Abbas. The government of Maili immediately started on the road of economic and cultural cooperation with other states, in particular with the Socialist ones.

Until 1960 the fundamental events of anti-imperialistic revolution in Africa showed themselves to the north of the equator, cutting the continent exactly in half; to the south was the undivided dark land of colonialism.

At the southern extremity of the continent is the sovereign state of the Union of South Africa. But this state was established on African soil by European colonialists. The aboriginal African population of the Union of South Africa experiences the very worst forms of colonial enslavement and is carrying on an exceptionally difficult fight for freedom. In Africa to the south of the equator, the Union of South Africa serves as a bastion of imperialism and colonialism.

Until 1960 the imperialists felt that they were still strong here. The peoples' movements in Kenya and Nyasaland were cruelly suppressed. The colonialists hoped to calm the anger of the peoples of the Belgian Congo, which burst with enormous strength in January of 1959, with constitutional reforms. Portuguese colonies called it the "zonal quiet." It seemed to the colonialists that they would dominate this part of Africa for an even longer length of time. But the events of 1960 overturned these plans: the anti-imperialistic revolution expanded even to Central Africa. The Congo is the richest storehouse of various strategic raw materials. Many imperialist powers, in particular the USA, invested in the exploitation of these natural resources. It is understandable why they all are interested in preserving the colonial regime there.

The imperialists thought that after granting the Congo formal independence, Belgium would be able to preserve its political and economic control over the Republic of the Congo, that is, it would be reduced to a "vassal sovereignty," as this form was called by Kwame Nkrumah in his speech at the XV Session of the General Assembly of the UN. However, the failure of these estimates was shown in the very first days of the Republic's existence. The government of Lumumba, reflecting the will of the people, thought not of fictitious, but of real, actual independence. It followed the course of developing business connections with all the countries of the world, including the Socialist, and announced its intention of establishing control over the activities of foreign companies, in order continually to guard the country from predatory exploitation. This caused alarm in the camp of the imperialists, who had been accustomed to robbing the country without restraint or control. An international conspiracy of imperialism was set up against the young state which had not yet been able even to establish order on its own territory.

The events in the Congo are of great international significance. Like the ray of the projector they brought attention to the dark intentions of the colonialists, their attempt to not admit the widely popular anti-imperialistic revolution in Africa, and to preserve that which still could be preserved as strong bases of colonialism. The imperialists well know that the struggle with the peoples of the Congo marks practically, more than the loss of their position in the country, from which they receive needed strategic raw materials and high profits. They know that the victory of the anti-imperialistic revolution in the Congo will greatly influence the development of the liberation movements in all countries of Central and South Africa: in Uganda and Tanganyika, Northern Rhodesia and Angola.

The events in the Congo have again shown that the chief enemy of the African peoples at this stage is the USA. The "anti-colonialism" of the US imperialists is only a means for realizing their colonialistic schemes. The old forms of colonialism, connected with the monopolistic political rule of European imperialistic powers, hinder and restrain the expansion of the USA on the African continent. Due to this, they do not mind making a fuss about the ugliness of the colonial system and even giving some support to the national-liberation movement counting on the fact that in the conditions of free competition the richer US monopolies will be able to crowd out their European rivals and replace the decrepit European forms of colonial rule with new American ones. However, experience shows that the US imperialists come out against the national-liberation movement every time it constitutes a threat to the strategic interest of the USA (for example in Algeria), or when the victory of the national revolution threatens to undermine the foundations of US imperialism. They acted in this way in the Congo, putting in power UN Secretary-General Hammerskjold as the chief of the international plot of the imperialistic powers.

The events in the Congo showed that the present structure of the executive organs of the UN are no longer in accordance with the interests of the world, and the security of the peoples must be examined. The dominance of the imperialistic powers, mainly the USA, in the executive organs of the UN led to the Security Council's resolution on the Congo not being accepted, UN troops being used against the lawful republican government, and the flag of this international organization serving as a screen for the dirty intrigues of the colonialists against the Congo. For this very reason the proposal of the Soviet delegation at the XV Session of the General Assembly concerning the re-examination of the structure of the UN executive organs was actively supported by the delegations from the states of Africa and Asia.

Summing up the development of the anti-imperialistic revolution in Africa in 1960, one must not pass over the question of

trusteeship territories. Until 1960 there were six states on the African continent under international wardship: the two Camerouns (the western -- British and the eastern -- French), Togo, Somali, Tanganyika, and Ruanda-Urundi. The imperialist states, bringing about this wardship with the consent of the UN, did not fulfill their obligations, and the UN Council of Trusteeship, where the imperialists also ruled, gave no help whatsoever to the peoples of these territories. Trusteeship served as a convenient screen for colonial plundering, and it was necessary for the peoples of these territories to wage a battle for independence, no less difficult than the colonial peoples'. This is paradoxical but a fact. Even on this question, due to the dominance of the imperialists, the United Nations became the weapon of the colonialists.

During 1960 the peoples of three trusteeship territories -- Eastern Cameroun, Togo, and Somali -- secured the removal of international wardship and achieved political independence. The question of the future fate of Western Cameroun -- annexation to Nigeria or reunification with the eastern part of Cameroun -- will be decided by means of a referendum at the beginning of 1961. Tanganyika in 1960 secured the right to establish its national government, which must be considered as a first step to liberation from trusteeship in the following year. In all probability the trusteeship will be removed even from Ruanda-Urundi. Thus, all prerequisites are established for the complete removal of international trusteeship from Africa in 1961.

The year 1960 will go down in history of the African peoples' national-liberation movement as a year of decisive victory. The vast territories to the north of the equator, which comprise more than two-thirds of the continent, were liberated from the direct rule of the European imperialist powers. The first stage of national revolution -- the transition of state power from the colonialists to the local, national powers -- must be regarded in this part of the continent as basically achieved. In the hands of the colonialists remained Algeria, long-suffering and drowned in blood, and a few small territories in the western part of Africa. In 1960 the anti-imperialistic revolution spread even to the south of the equator.

The African peoples have had great success in their fight against imperialism and colonialism. But 60 million Africans still live under the conditions of the colonial regime, and the total area of African colonies still exceeds the territory of all the European capitalistic states together. Under this colonial system are Kenya, Rhodesia, Angola, Mozambique -- countries for whose domination the imperialists will struggle with a special persistence. Even these countries will triumph in a short time. The guarantee of this is not only the inflexible will of the African peoples, but also the effective help of all progressive mankind.

The raising of the question by the Soviet delegation at the XV Session of the UN General Assembly played a great role in the mobilization of the progressive forces of the world for the fight for final liquidation of colonialism. "It is urgently necessary to grant complete independence and freedom in the establishment of their own national states to all colonial countries, trusteeships, and other non-self-governing territories in accordance with the expressed will and desire of their peoples. Colonial rule, colonial administration, in all its forms must be completely abolished in order to give to the peoples of such territories the possibility of defining themselves their fate and forms of state rule," -- such is the major request of the Soviet declaration on granting independence to the colonial countries and peoples.

The days of colonialism in its old forms are numbered. The direct political rule of the imperialist powers in Africa is approaching its end. Political independence will soon be achieved by all African countries. But "political independence by itself," as President of the Republic of Guinea Sekou Toure said at the XV Session of the UN General Assembly, "does not at all mean complete national freedom. Of course it signifies a decisive and important stage. Nevertheless, we must admit that national independence includes not only political freedom, but mainly, complete economic freedom."

The achievement of state power does not resolve all the problems of national revolution. This is only the beginning, the first stage. It further remains for the African peoples, using their own national state system, to work out many complicated problems in order finally to do away with the remains of colonialism, and to develop the national economy and national culture. The achievement of political self-government is the most important prerequisite for the solution of all other problems of national revolution. And in this sense, 1960, having brought political independence to 16 African countries, appears in the history of Africa as a significant year.